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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A PATHWAY TOWARD A SHARED HORIZON

BY

DAVID PAUL CALHOON

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A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an account of my search for a more responsible human science methodology as a pathway towards better understanding among people of different cultures. Phenomenology, hermeneutics, narrative studies, and dialogical anthropology are some of the areas explored in an attempt to find a complimentary approach toward understanding a culture which is not one's own.

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My Journeying Begins

Where I Have Come From

A metaphorical remembering of my early childhood.

I was born in the wilds of the Yukon Territory and raised by a family of wolves. My parents worked hard at foraging and hunting to provide a living for the family. They were skilled providers and we never wanted for food or shelter. Periodically, we would move to find better hunting or living conditions. There was no sacrifice they were not willing to make for the welfare of the family.

My parents seldom attended parent functions at school, or visited my teachers, or harassed me about my homework. Their hunting and foraging consumed their time and I admired their considerable skills in these activities. They never tried to mold or shape me with their opinions or prejudices. I appreciated the level of trust and the degree of freedom they afforded me. At the time I never realized that this behavior had anything to do with the fact that they were wolves. I just assumed that this was normal parental behavior and, like my wolf cub sister, I was expected to learn about life from "the world." I chose my own friends and activities, with my parents always there to support me and occasionally to guide me out of harm's way.

A non-metaphorical remembering of my adolescence.

Because of my upbringing, which I only later realized to be unusual, I was ill prepared when I entered Blocker Junior High School. I didn't know that Mexican kids were bad and should be avoided. I was unaware that associating with "low achievers" could pull me down and damage my own potential. I must have missed one of Piaget's critical stages because I was hopeless. No matter how hard my friends and teachers tried to teach me, I was unable to acquire the proper social skills. I blundered blindly around, liking everyone and shunning none. Certainly, I could see that there were all these differences among people, but for some reason I just couldn't care.

I knew that Magdeleno Jaramillo had been held back four times and was sixteen years old in grade seven, but he was a merchant marine and could punch his fist through the fender of a Chevrolet Corvette. I knew that Ernesto Hernandez could speak very little English and no matter what question the teacher asked him he answered, "Hamburgers!;" but he earned fifty dollars every Saturday night prize fighting against grown men and spent the money on groceries for his family. I was fairly certain that Dwight Crawford would never, ever, ever finish grade eight, but he was the biggest and fastest human being in the world and had been driving his own car since he was twelve. Preston Jones was such a nerd he would

never make the football team, but he had built a time delayed incendiary device that caused the principal's (Mr. MacKee, the meanest man alive) car to catch fire in the middle of morning classes.

People were just so interesting! Whenever a new student would arrive during the school year I always made it a project to try to get to know them. Perhaps because I had been the outsider so many times, I felt a special affinity for new kids in school.

As a result of my wide variety of associations and my strong curiosity, I acquired many important life skills (i.e. making good marks in school, pitching a baseball, shooting pool, forging my parents' signatures, bowling, driving a car, boxing, long distance running, drinking beer, driving a tractor, tackling a ball carrier, fishing, playing golf, milking cows, playing poker, shooting a basketball, being polite, algebra, running from police, typing, marksmanship, swearing in Spanish, being shy, staying out of trouble, etc.). I never felt completely a member of any one group, but I was excluded from none.

During the 1960's there was a series of deaths which effected my life: John Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald, Jack Ruby, Grandpa Trommatter, Grandma Trommatter, John Medley (friend and classmate killed in Viet Nam), Robert Kennedy,

Martin Luther King. I was puzzled and amazed by the variety of reactions these deaths provoked in the people around me.

I wondered listlessly through three years of university until an amazing thing happened. The most incredibly beautiful, intelligent, and talented person I had ever encountered married me. Because of my almost terminal shyness, I am certain that if not for the fortuitous coincidence that Linda was also aggressive (twenty years ahead of her time) I would not only still be single, but probably still a virgin.

A brief remembering of my adulthood. Since this union the major elements of my life can be summarized by the following events:

1. A painfully aggressive refusal to serve in the Viet Nam War.
2. Two incredible years north of the Arctic circle teaching, living, and learning in an Inuit village which included: much more learning than teaching, warm friendships with some amazingly sane people, dark winters full of visiting and reading, bright summers full of life.
3. Completion of our Education degrees.
4. Four years teaching, living, and learning in south Texas with Hispanic migrant farm workers which included: frustrating feelings of inadequacy and guilt, satisfying feelings of success, friendships with some wonderful people

(children and adults), aggravation with an uncaring political system.

5. Ten years farming, in partnership with Linda, which included: hard physical labor, great satisfaction with good crops, total obsession with the weather, frustration and disappointment with failed crops, time off for world travel, working with some wonderful people, getting rich, buying expensive toys (houses, condos, expensive cars), and going broke.

6. Two years managing a ski shop in New Mexico, which included: hard work, long hours, an arduous commute, association with some great young people from around the world, lots of problem solving, and skiing.

7. Moving to Canada so that Linda could pursue her Ph.D. and I my M.Ed.

This forty year journeying I have so briefly described was, like all of our journeys through life, filled with smaller journeys and choices made as to which paths to take and how to travel. Although it is interesting to reflect on our past journeying and the infinitely complex set of circumstances that have brought us to our current spatial temporal position (here, now), the real challenge is that next step,

My Orientation to the Path

A metaphor extended. How our lives are lived seems to depend a great deal on which paths we choose or, in many instances, which paths choose us. Indeed, I am at a loss to decide whether this path was chosen by me or I was chosen by this path. I suspect that both viewpoints apply.

In any event this text is the story of my journeying as a stranger along a specific path, and the wonder and the hope that path offers me as a teacher and a learner in a multicultural world. This story tells of those who have traveled this way before me, why I must go this way, and the travelers I have met along the way.

Throughout this journey I encounter other strangers along the way. Some of them travel with me for a bit before going their own ways. Some are traveling faster than I am and go on ahead. Others are going more slowly and I lose sight of them behind me. Many of these I will meet again; catching up to them when they stop to rest, or they overtaking me as I pause to admire the view. Still others cross my path at right angles and I realize I will never see them again as they travel a different road. There are many who no longer live and travel (at least not in the literal sense of those words) but have left their messages along the path as guides for those who come after.

I journey as a stranger. In reflecting on this journey I feel a need to examine what may be a fundamental orientation of my journey through life: that of the "stranger." I travel the paths of life as a stranger and I encounter countless strangers along the way. There is power (positive and negative) in our strangeness to each other which compels me to explore further.

> The discovery that things in his new surroundings look quite different from what he expected them to be at home is frequently the first shock to the stranger's confidence in the validity of his habitual "thinking as usual."(Schutz, 1970, p. 89)

"Arrival".

The single engine float plane has been bouncing from air pocket to air pocket for four hours now. The pilot, Linda, and I, along with our belongings, fill every cubic inch of the plane's cabin. We are passing over a breathtakingly beautiful Alaskan Arctic landscape. The Brooks range lies to the north; spruce and birch forests border the Kobuk river below.

The pilot points out the Inuit village of Ambler on the bluff ahead. As we begin to descend my pulse rate quickens. My apprehension at my first float plane landing is as nothing compared to that of being dropped off in this remote and

foreign (although beautiful) outpost for a year of volunteer work.

The plane is met by what seems to be the entire village population. The combination of the July heat (90 degrees fahrenheit) and the odor of huge racks of drying fish assaults our senses. We hear the sound of a Hank Williams song, "Your Cheating Heart," being played on a wind-up record player which is in the process of winding down. Hank is being accompanied by hundreds of barking sled dogs. There are a dozen naked Inuit children splashing and playing in the river nearby.

After exchanging greetings with the villagers, we unload our provisions onto the beach. We all stand and watch the plane take off, headed back to Fairbanks. Linda and I say nothing to each other but the unspoken thought we share is, "What in the hell are we doing here?!"

Being escorted to our cabin does nothing to assuage our growing anxiety. This 14 foot by 16 foot one room log cabin, furnished only with an oil drum converted to a wood stove and an inch of dust, is to be our home for the next twelve months. No electricity, no plumbing, no table, no chairs, no bed, no-thing. Nothing, that is, besides a fair population of noisily buzzing blue-bottle flies.

While we spend the afternoon unpacking and cleaning, the cabin is visited by an steady stream of adults and children.

They come in and squat quietly, very quietly, with their backs to the walls. They are simply watching us. We make inane chatter in an attempt to fill the uncomfortable (for us) silence. This elicits some smiles, and an occasional comment in Inyupiat, but nothing we would call conversation. We offer them cookies and crackers. They offer us dried fish and caribou. Everything in this place looks, sounds, smells, and tastes strange to us.

Finally at 11 p.m., with the sun still shining brightly, the last visitor leaves. We lock our door, crawl into our sleeping bag (more exhausted than we have ever been), and cry ourselves to sleep.

Stranger defined. This anecdote recounts an experience in my life where I felt very much like a "stranger." Before examining more closely what it feels like to be a stranger, I would like to take a brief look at the word "stranger" and what it might mean.

According to Funk and Wagnalls Canadian College Dictionary (1989), "stranger" has four common definitions: 1) One who is not an acquaintance, 2) An unfamiliar visitor; guest, 3) A foreigner, 4) One unversed in or unfamiliar with something specified.

"Stranger" is from the word "strange" which is defined as: 1) Previously unknown, unseen, or unheard of; unfamiliar.

2) Not according to the ordinary way; unaccountable; remarkable.

3) Pertaining to another or others; of a different class, character, or kind.

4) Foreign; alien.

5) Distant in manner; reserved; shy.

6) Inexperienced; unskilled; unaccustomed.

It is from the Old French "estrange" and the Latin "extraneous" and "extra" meaning foreign or on the outside (Funk and Wagnalls, 1989).

Living as a stranger. Being a stranger can provoke both positive (adventure, intrigue, diversion, excitement, wonder, curiosity, objectivity, mystique, romance) and negative (discomfort, disorientation, anxiety, fear, hate, confusion, stress, resentment, loneliness, despair) connotations. During the course of my journey, a remarkable number of these words and definitions reveal themselves as appropriate to the lived experience of being a stranger, and to the emotions that experience engenders. Being a stranger and being with strangers would seem to be unavoidable consequences of living, and it is this "living" as, and with, strangers that I wish to examine.

Heidegger, in his early work on the fundamental question of "being," looks to the Greeks in examining what "being human" means. He quotes from the Antigone of Sophocles:

> There is much that is strange, but nothing
> that surpasses man in strangeness....
> And he has found his way
> to the resonance of the word,
> and to wind-swift all-understanding,
> and to the courage of rule over cities....
> Everywhere journeying, inexperienced and without issue,
> he comes to nothingness.
> Through no flight can he resist
> the one assault of death,...
> He wends his way between the laws of the earth
> and adjured justice of the gods....(p. 146, 1959)

Heidegger interprets this passage as the fundamental Greek definition of man. He explains:

> We are taking the strange, the uncanny, as that which casts us out of the "homely," i.e. the customary, familiar, secure. The unhomely prevents us from making ourselves at home and therein it is overpowering. But man is the strangest of all, not only because he passes his life amid the strange..but because he departs from his customary, familiar limits.... (Heidegger, p. 151, 1959)

Therefore, being a stranger may be more than just a

characteristic of being human. It may be the essence of "being human" itself.

As human beings, our first experience as "stranger" occurs at birth. We are pushed from the womb into the waiting hands of someone we have never met before. Most of us take one look around and scream. Thus begins a life that to many of us seems to be an endless succession of leaving familiar situations and entering new situations as a stranger.

Because we are mobile social beings, being a stranger appears unavoidable. We move from grade to grade and from school to school while acquiring our formal education. Many of our families move to new neighborhoods, cities, or countries while we are growing up. Most of us change jobs and occupations during our working lifetime. Even death could be viewed as one last entry as a stranger into a new experience that is the most unknown of all. As Peter Pan said when the waters rose around him, "Dying would be a very big adventure indeed" (Barry, p. 129, 1911).

These are only a few of the more obvious ways we experience being a stranger. Our lives are filled with less obvious experiences of "strangerness." When we go on holidays to places we have never been we become the strangers known as "tourists." We often feel like a stranger when we attend a party or social function with people we don't know.

Business and professional conferences may be experienced as a stranger even though we are members of the sponsoring organizations. A long absence may cause us to feel like a stranger when we reunite with friends or loved ones.

The pervasiveness of these experiences in our lives might lead us to take them for granted. However, this pervasiveness can also be an incentive to reflect on these experiences in a search for some meanings and implications resulting from these "every day" experiences of being a stranger. I am engaged by the notion that how we act and react "as" strangers, as well as how we act and react "toward" strangers, may have powerful and fundamental importance in our lives together as living beings.

The lived experience of being a stranger in a culture that is not one's own seems to be particularly relevant in this regard. Alfred Schutz, in his work on the sociology of the life world, makes a careful and thorough examination of this topic. He uses this concept to explain the difficulties experienced by people from one culture when, through choice or necessity, they must make their lives in a different culture. He also examines the reactions of the new culture to the stranger in their midst. Finally, Schutz (1970) describes how this interaction, and the resulting misunderstandings can dramatically effect social relations between cultures.

I would like to examine some of Schutz's phenomenologically based theory and attempt to enrich this theory by grounding it in the lived experiences of being a stranger. I will attempt to do this by presenting segments of his theory and offering stories or anecdotes which may exemplify the concept.

Before looking at the stranger in this relationship, we must first take at least a brief look at what it means to "not" be a stranger within a culture. What does it mean to be at home in one's own culture? Schutz (1970) expresses it like this:

> The subjective meaning the group has for its members consists in their knowledge of a common situation, and with it a common system of typifications and relevances. This situation has its history in which the individual members' biographies participate; and the system of typification and relevances determining the situation forms a common relative natural conception of the world. Here the individual members are "at home," that is they find their bearings without difficulty in the common surroundings, guided by a set of recipes of more or less institutionalized habits, mores, folkways, etc., that help them come to terms with beings and

> fellow-men belonging to the same situation. The system of typifications and relevances shared with the other members of the group defines the social roles, positions, and statuses of each. This acceptance of a common system of relevances leads the members of the group to a homogeneous self-typification. (p. 82)

At home. I awaken and smell bacon cooking. It is 7 a.m. and time to get up. The radio is on the CBC station and the news is filled with car accidents involving drunk drivers, murders committed by escaped convicts, and politicians making the same old promises. I listen only to hear the weather forecast so I can select the right clothing for the day. It's cold, as usual, so I will dress warm.

Linda leaves for an early appointment at the university and I leave shortly after for my part time job at the ski shop. Traffic is heavy but I know all the back streets and alleys to avoid the jam-ups. I arrive at work on time and find the usual collection of things for me to do. After exchanging greetings with the owner and other employees I go to the back workshop.

There are several sets of skis for me to work on. The radio is tuned to a station that plays classic rock. I sing along with the old tunes and day dream as my hands automatically tar and wax skis. Periodically, the store

becomes busy and I leave my shop work to sell merchandise or make conversation with the customers. The morning passes quickly and it is soon time for me to go to university.

In the lobby of the Education building I encounter a friend and we stand and talk for a while. She is telling me a story about a student of hers and I laugh at her exasperation. I know just how she feels. We both realize that we need to get to our work, so we say goodbye and I head for my office. I begin my afternoon by eating my sack lunch and having a cup of tea.

The day proceeds as a busy, but productive, series of appointments and tasks including a meeting with my advisor, a library literature search, and a session on the word processor. These activities are interspersed with interruptions and conversations with colleagues and acquaintances.

At 5:30 p.m. I leave for home, looking forward to barbecuing a chicken for dinner and watching a movie on TV. After sharing our day's news and a relaxing evening, we bathe and go to bed. The day was a busy one but it held no surprises and little stress.

Embodiment of culture. The fact that we embody our culture enables us to live our lives within that culture in a more or less automatic fashion. Schutz asserts that within our home culture our "thinking as usual" is consistent with

the other members of our culture and therefore we may act and react "almost without thinking" with a reasonable chance of success in our endeavors (Schutz, 1970).

It is this very embodiment of our culture and the resulting "thinking and acting as usual" which is one major source of difficulty for the stranger. Schutz (1970) explains that we are not only forever unable to completely acquire a new culture and make it fully our own, we are also unable to ever completely shed our old culture. He states, "Graves and reminiscences can neither be transferred nor conquered" (p. 88).

> The stranger, therefore, approaches the other group as a newcomer in the true meaning of the term. At best he (she) may be willing and able to share the present and the future with the approached group in vivid and immediate experience; under all circumstances, however, he (she) remains excluded from such experiences of its past. Seen from the point of view of the approached group, he (she) is a man (woman) without a history. (p. 88) (my parenthetical insertions)

"The Foot Race".

The village of Shungnak, Alaska is holding their annual Eskimo games. Having decided to participate in some way, and lacking experience in "high kicking," "knuckle hopping," or

"finger wrestling," I find myself standing on the starting line for the "foot race." It is early March and the world north of the arctic circle is still white. The sun is shining, but the temperature is about -10 degrees fahrenheit and the wind is blowing hard.

The starter describes the route we are to run. Since the description is in Inyupiat, I understand very little. I ask the young man next to me, "How far?" I am stunned at his reply, "About twelve miles." Oh well, I used to run distances as a schoolboy and have run that far in training. There are twenty young Inuit men in the race. I feel confident I can compete since most of them are smokers and I am sure none of them have had formal training as long distance runners.

The gun sounds and they all take off as though they are running a hundred yard dash. This boosts my confidence as I am certain they will burn themselves out and be unable to finish such a long race. However, as I continue to run my well paced race the group in front of me pulls quickly away until I can no longer see them through the blowing snow. Still, I believe I will soon begin to overtake them as they tire and slow. I keep following their tracks in the snow.

Periodically, someone drives by on a snowmobile and asks if I am alright (sometimes they even have the gall to ask if I want a ride!). After about an hour the tracks are growing

faint and it seems there are fewer of them. I begin to worry that I may become lost. The tracks remain visible and I keep running, now determined only to finish the race.

After almost two hours, now following what appears to be only three sets of footprints, I see the village ahead. There are three young children at the finish line, smiling as I cross. I ask them how I did and they tell me that I finished fourth. I feel a touch of pride at this, but then they ask me why I kept running. After all, they inform me, prize money is awarded only to the first three finishers. Everyone else in the race had the common sense to catch a snowmobile ride in when they realized they wouldn't finish in the top three. Nobody could understand why the white guy was still running.

The uncertainty of the stranger. As a stranger we are often uncertain as to the "proper" thing to say or do. We may appear insecure and indecisive. This follows as a natural result of the discovery that our old values and patterns of behavior are not appropriate or acceptable in the culture in which we must now make our lives.

"La Grulla".

The village of La Grulla, Texas, sits on the north bank of the Rio Grande river. On the south bank lies the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico. The population of La Grulla is almost 100% Hispanic (Mexican American and Mexican). The people are

migrant farm workers from both sides of the border. The first language of La Grulla is Spanish.

It is Monday morning and the temperature is hot. It is a heat that comes up from the ground as well as down from the sun. I am walking from the parking lot of Grulla Elementary toward Grulla Junior High. It is the first day of my first teaching assignment. I don't feel like a teacher. I feel strange.

A group of young men, drinking beer and working on a car, note my passing and yell, "Que tal, hombre? Que paso, primo?! Quieras cervesa? (What's happening, man? What's going on, cousin? Want a beer?). They laugh loudly. I am at a complete loss for an appropriate response. I feel like the word "gringo" is tattooed on my forehead. I smile self consciously, wave, and keep on walking.

The school is a two story yellow brick box sitting in a field made bare by a lack of rain and a herd of goats. It has twelve foot ceilings and wooden floors made dark by fifty years of sweeping with oiled sawdust. The principal greets me and tells me my room number. He says, "Good luck, you're going to need it!"

I walk to my room and wait nervously for the bell to ring. I feel like I don't belong here; like I'm not a teacher, but only pretending to be a teacher. When the bell rings my heart begins to pound. I try to look calm and

confident as the room begins to fill with eighth graders. Many of them are bigger than I am, and some appear to be almost my age. The conversation is in Spanish and I am catching little of it. I feel a touch of paranoia that they may be talking about me. They are loud and rowdy and cocky and totally consumed by puberty.

The tension between the egos in this room, including my own, is palpable. I have no idea what I am about to say, but I think that if I can only speak there may just be a chance that they won't eat me.

The practical problems of the stranger. The resulting confusion, disorientation, discomfort, anxiety, and insecurity can be much more than just emotional states for the stranger. They can cause major practical difficulties in living, acting, and surviving in a strange culture.

> The cultural pattern of the approached group is to the stranger not a shelter but a field of adventure, not a matter of course but a questionable topic of investigation, not an instrument for disentangling problematic situations but a problematic situation itself and one hard to master. (Schutz, 1970, p.93)

"El Maestro".

We cross the Rio Grande river into Mexico as we have done countless times before. Even though we can see Mexico

from our home on the Texas side of the river there is always a feeling of strangeness associated with crossing the border. Since we will be traveling two hundred miles into a remote mountain area there is also a feeling of adventure about this crossing. Pancho and Belinda, friends and fellow teachers, are accompanying Linda and me. We have been planning this camping trip for months.

The passage through Mexican customs goes smoothly enough with only a brief inspection of our Chevrolet Suburban full of camping gear. We all speak Spanish, it is Belinda's first language, and this always seems to facilitate the process. Our documents are in order and we are on our way.

We pass smoothly through the twenty kilometer checkpoint and head south after passing Saltillo. This is new terrain for all of us and I am high with a feeling of anticipation. The country is beautiful with twelve thousand foot mountains bordering a long valley filled with apple orchards. It is amazing how much the country has changed only four hours from the border. Gaining five thousand feet of elevation has transformed the landscape from the hot arid brush and cactus environment of the border into a temperate verdant subalpine ecosystem. This extreme difference in the appearance of the world heightens the feeling of foreignness.

A loud thump followed by a terrible grinding noise from the front of our Suburban brings a sudden end to my reverie.

Tremendous vibration forces us to a stop. The automatic locking hub on our right front wheel has exploded. We pick up some of the countless tiny broken parts scattered along the highway behind us. Our camping trip is over and a different kind of experience is just beginning.

We look at the map and find that the nearest town is fifteen miles ahead. It is eighty miles back to Saltillo, so that route is out of the question. Since the truck will only limp along at about ten miles per hour, San Luis is our only choice. It is a very small dot on the map. An hour and a half later we must acknowledge the cartographers' accuracy.

The village of San Luis is a very small farming community consisting of a church, a school, and a collection of small houses. We stop and ask a man if there is a "mecanico" in town. He points to a small shed just up the road. There is a corrugated metal lean-to attached to the shed, and a group of young boys are gathered around an old Volkswagen Beetle under the lean-to.

As we grind to a halt the boys all stop what they are doing and look at us. A small middle aged man crawls out from under the VW and smiles as he approaches us. We exchange amenities and then tell him of our problem. He says that it is lunch time now and he must go home for some "papas" (potatoes) but when he returns he will examine our truck and evaluate the situation.

He and the boys march off toward the village and leave us feeling quite helplessly alone.

Thunder clouds gather over us (appropriately enough) and we must seek shelter in the truck as it first rains mud and then begins to hail. The storm apparently lengthens the lunch hour and it is after 3 p.m. when the mechanic returns. He orders his young apprentices to bring this tool and that as he removes the wheel in order to assess the damage. The boys address him as "Maestro" (master) as they respond eagerly to his directions. The mechanic's obvious competence gives me a momentary feeling of optimism, but this turns to despair as he shakes his head and gravely mutters, "Muy triste!".

It is obvious that he can do nothing without the proper replacement parts. It is Saturday evening and, in any event, the necessary parts are not likely to be available in Mexico. We must go home to get the parts.

We inquire about buses and are informed that there are none scheduled until the next morning. Our attempts to flag down an unscheduled bus are not successful. Pancho and I try in vain for half an hour to hitch a ride. It is getting dark and I am about ready to give up and begin looking for a place to camp.

Perhaps not surprisingly Linda and Belinda have better luck. They yell for us to come as they have stopped a big

truck and garnered us a ride. The truck is headed for Laredo, Texas with a load of broccoli. Belinda crawls up behind the seat into the sleeper, Linda starts to sit next to the driver but realizes where the gear shift will then be located and makes Pancho change places with her. I jam in last and close the door. We roll.

The driver seems glad for the company and talks non-stop as he hauls his big rig around the narrow mountain roads. He drives fast, honking his horn as he cuts across the centerline on sharp blind curves. He asks Belinda to hand him a Coke from the sleeper. She finally retrieves one from underneath her and comments that she hopes he likes warm sodas. He opens the bottle with his teeth and spits the lid out the window. The four of us just look at each other.

We skirt the edge of Monterey and catch the Pan American Highway toward Laredo. It is flat here and the driver really lets the truck fly. We are anxious to get to Laredo but it is difficult not to be nervous at this speed.

We reach the twenty kilometer check point and must plead with the customs agent to let us pass. The source of confusion is that Linda's visa shows a Chevrolet Suburban which is not with us. It seems that one cannot leave Mexico without the car one brings in. The agent acknowledges that this is difficult if the car won't run. But rules are rules.

After a half hour of argument the customs agent finally throws up his hands and lets us go, but he warns us we will have trouble at the border. He is right. After being dropped off by our truck driver (he cannot cross the border with hitchhikers) we stop a cab and head for the bridge. We spend another half hour with Mexican customs officers trying to figure out what to do. We must turn in our visas before leaving Mexico. But Linda's visa has a truck on it which is still in Mexico. The truck must be repaired in order to leave Mexico. The parts to repair the truck are in Texas. What to do.

Again the combination of our perseverance and their fatigue succeeds. They get so tired of arguing with us that they too throw up their hands and allow us to pass. Linda keeps her papers while Pancho, Belinda, and I turn ours in. It is 2 a.m. and we are so relieved to finally be on the American side of the river. We crossed into Mexico only 16 hours ago, a fact my reason accepts but my body refuses to believe.

We check in at the Laredo Hilton and phone Linda's mother to come get us in the morning. For Pancho and Belinda the adventure is nearly over, but for Linda and me it has just reached the halfway point.

The next morning, while waiting for Linda's mother to arrive, we call our Chevy dealer. The parts department is

closed on Sundays but the salesman gives us the manager's home phone number. The service manager kindly agrees to meet us at the dealership at noon to sell us our parts. Everything is so easy on this side of the river. Credit cards and phone calls are so effective here while in San Luis we were helpless.

By the middle of the afternoon Linda and I are crossing the river back into Mexico. Why does crossing that bridge make me feel so different. How can the world change so much in just five hundred feet? We enter the Mexican customs office and make a big mistake. We tell the truth.

There is no problem for me getting a visa for myself and our pickup truck. The problem is Linda. We make the mistake of showing them her document and are informed that she should not have left Mexico with that document. We explain all about the broken vehicle, no parts, and our discussion with Mexican officials at Laredo. It does not matter, the regulation is clear. If there is a vehicle listed on a persons's visa, that person cannot travel without that vehicle. Linda does not have the Suburban so she cannot pass. The officer is intransigent and we are stuck.

Beside us at the counter is a large, prosperous looking, middle aged Mexican woman. She has apparently been listening and observing our plight. Linda's eyes are red and tearful (she has new contacts and one is in backwards). The Mexican

woman thinks that Linda is crying and she begins to console her. She becomes indignant and turns her ire on the customs officer. She harangues him for being so mean to this "pobrecita" (poor little girl). Linda realizes that the customs officer is becoming very uncomfortable by this scene (everyone in the building is now watching and siding with Linda), so she rubs her eyes and lets the tears flow. He can stand it no longer; he is defeated. He stamps our papers and we pass.

At the twenty kilometer checkpoint we must go through the whole deal again. We ask them to call the border to verify our legal passage. They have no phone. We plead. I follow the chief officer around as he tries to walk away. Eventually he wearies and relents. We are on our way again.

After spending the night in a small motel near Saltillo we head for San Luis in the morning. Our Suburban is just as we left it. The mechanic informs us that one of his apprentices slept in it the last two nights to protect it from thieves or vandals. Such a big modern vehicle attracts a lot of attention. "El Maestro" and his boys get right to work. There is also a group of men from the village who have come to observe. The work goes quickly in spite of the primitive tools (many of them home made) the mechanic has to use. I am amazed at his competence and resourcefulness. I feel certain that he has never worked on an automatic locking

hub before but it holds no mystery for him. His hands move deftly and the work is soon complete.

When the jack is removed from under the truck I ask him how much we owe for the repairs. He says that they must test drive the truck to make sure everything is all right. "El Maestro" and all five of his young apprentices get in the Suburban and start the engine. The village men all laugh and yell, "Que te vaya bien!" (Have a good trip!) as they drive away. The stereo is blaring, the air conditioner is going full blast, the horn is honking, and the electric windows are going up and down as the Suburban makes a slow circuit through the village.

Fifteen minutes later the truck returns and the mechanic tells us everything is working fine. I ask again, "Quantos?" (How much?). He begins to pace as he computes the charges. I imagine that he is trying to come up with an appropriate fee for these obviously rich "gringos," one that will make him alot of money, but not offend us too much. It is apparently a tough decision for he continues to pace for a long time. Finally he stops and says (in English!), "Thirty dollars."

Linda and I smile at each other. We are astounded at the obvious integrity of this man. We pay him double that amount and ask him to also accept a set of wrenches and hex keys from our tool box. He is dignified in his acceptance

and everyone wishes us a safe trip as we drive away. We fill up with gas in Saltillo and do not stop again until Texas.

The importance of the trivial. Most of our experiences as and with strangers seem not to be of great importance. They are in fact so commonplace as to go almost unnoticed in our daily lives. However, upon reflection we may find much in these experiences that will help us to better understand others and ourselves. Paulo Freire (1985), in an interview with Donaldo Macedo, recounts an anecdote and comments on this subject:

> After three weeks or so in Chile, I went for a walk down a street in Santiago with a Chilean friend, and with a typical Brazilian gesture I put my hand on his shoulder as we walked. Suddenly he began to feel uncomfortable. I sensed his uneasiness and he finally told me, "Paulo, just between us, I don't feel comfortable having a man's hand on my shoulder." I moved my hand, of course, and thanked him for letting me know how he felt. When I went home I wondered, "Is there something wrong with a culture that rejects an affectionate gesture?"
>
> Then, years later, I visited Tanzania in Africa. During a class break, an African professor and friend of mine invited me for a walk through the

> campus. While we walked he suddenly grabbed my hand and put his fingers between mine as if we were lovers strolling through the gardens of the university. I felt terribly uncomfortable. As a Brazilian from the northeast, a culture profoundly "machista," I could not have reacted in any other way. I could not accept that I was holding hands with another man. I had only experienced this with women.
>
> When he let go of my hand for a moment, I quickly put both hands in my pockets in fear that he would grab my hand again. Later I wondered, "Paulo, is there something wrong with your own culture that rejects an affectionate gesture?"
>
> This sort of thing seems not to be that significant, but I would like to point out...that seemingly trivial incidents are, in fact, very important because they involve our whole lives, our cultures, the distinctive features that distinguish man from the other animals. Culture extends history to the praxis of people. (pp.182-183)

Social significance of "strangerness". Ultimately, the feelings and emotions resulting from our experiences as strangers transcend our lives as individuals and effect the relationships between the cultures which share this planet.

The misunderstandings and the resulting misassumptions between cultures can result in a "vicious circle" of escalating mistrust and prejudice. Bigotry, racism, chauvinism, elitism, and other prejudices may have their roots in the "strangeness" of the "other."

The destructive effects of misunderstanding may arise not primarily from our inability to understand the stranger but from our assumption that we do understand. Let us examine some unfortunately common statements:

A woman's place is in the home.

Most poor people just don't want to work.

Jewish people only care about money.

White people think they are better than everyone else.

Homosexuals should not be allowed to hold public office.

Indian children are less intelligent than white children.

Children with AIDS should not be allowed to attend public school.

Handicapped children should not attend regular schools.

These statements result from a vain and inherently arrogant assumption of understanding, not from a lack of understanding alone.

Schutz (1970) explains how the attitudes that the members of different cultures have about each other can have

a continuing and destructive effect on the relations between cultures. He states:

> On the one hand, the in-group feels itself frequently misunderstood by the out-group; such failure to understand its ways of life, so the in-group feels, must be rooted in hostile prejudices or in bad faith, since the truths held by the in-group are "matters of course," self-evident and, therefore, understandable by any human being. This feeling may lead to a partial shift of the system of relevances prevailing among the in-group, namely, by originating a solidarity of resistance against outside criticism. The out group is then looked at with repugnance, disgust, aversion, antipathy, hatred, or fear.
>
> On the other hand, a vicious circle is thus set up because the out-group, by the changed reaction of the in-group, is fortified in its interpretation of the traits of the in-group as highly detestable. (pp.86-87)

"The Native the Brit".

I am sitting in a small conference room filled with about forty people. The schedule says that this session is on native education from a global perspective. I presume that we are all here because of a shared interest in, or

involvement with, Native education. The group appears to be made up of approximately equal numbers of Native Canadians and "whites."

The speaker begins by saying that, although we will be looking at Native education, we will not be talking about educating Natives. Rather we will be examining the potential education that Native cultures have to offer the world community. We will attempt to see how aboriginal values and philosophies have much to offer the world by demonstrating ways of living in balance with nature, ways of sharing the planet without consuming it.

I am intrigued by the theme and impressed by the speaker's poise and apparent sensitivity. He begins with a brief discussion of the history of western colonization of North America. He presents an honest and accurate, although somewhat glib, history of this colonization.

A woman in the middle of the room begins to gesture and try to get his attention. The speaker yields to her and she stands. She speaks with a strong British accent and appears to be about fifty years old. She has only recently come from England and is working with a government agency in Yellowknife. She is angry and begins lambasting the speaker for portraying the British in what she believes is an unfairly evil light. Having gotten the floor she is reluctant to release it until she has explained to us that

the British had the best of intentions when they brought civilization to the wilderness.

The speaker states that his intention is not to offend but only to explore the effects of colonization on the aboriginal peoples of this continent. At this point the British woman interrupts again to state that even if bad things did happen, they happened a long time ago. She could not be held responsible because these things happened long before her birth. She says that she wants to help the Natives. She would help them if she just understood what they wanted, if they would only tell her what they wanted. I am feeling very uncomfortable and wish that this person would be quiet so that the session could continue.

I am relieved when she sits down, but then a young, perhaps twenty year old, woman stands up. She is blond and fair and I think, "Oh no, not another offended white!" When she begins to speak I realize that this is something quite different.

The young woman's voice is strained and her hands are shaking. She says that it is very difficult for her to speak in front of people but that she can no longer remain silent. She says that she is a Native, born on a reserve into a Cree family. Because of her coloring, she has struggled all her life with her identity. She has heard about the speaker and

of his message of a world wide community, and she has come to the conference specifically to hear him speak.

The young woman turns now to face the British woman. The tears are streaming down her face as she tells the British woman that, if she cannot participate in the spirit of this gathering with love and friendship, she should "please shut up!" She is sobbing as she sits down. There is only silence among us now and her's are not the only tear filled eyes.

What Path to Take

Where I Want to Go

My pedagogical need to understand. Because of my experiences in Alaska twenty years ago, my dormant interest in native education reasserts itself upon coming to Alberta to study. I am dismayed to see so few signs of progress in so many years. I need to look deeper. I search the "literature;" I examine the "public information." The news is not good.

Mixed signals. A common goal, perhaps the common goal, of Native educational policies before 1969 was to bring Indian children into the schools in order to educate and assimilate them into non-Indian Canadian society (Friesen, 1977). But in recent years there has been a growing awareness that traditional education has been a failure for the Indian child and that education must be relevant to Indian culture.

Alberta Education now states that "Native education must be attuned to the diverse needs, cultures, and life-styles of Native students so that they can build on their self-esteem and gain a better understanding of themselves through the study of their own heritage and cultures" (Alberta Education, March, 1987). This sounds great, I am encouraged.

Although there are a growing number of Indian teachers, the non-Indian teacher is still, by far, the dominant experience for the Indian child. This is due, not illogically, to the relatively limited number of certified Indian teachers available. The more complex issue this provokes is why there are so few Indian teachers.

Some of the problems which arise from having teachers who are strangers within a culture can lead to feelings of frustration and resentment. These feelings can be heard in the words of some Native people:

> Most children want to learn but some have problems. The teachers don't want ot understand and aren't interested in the children (Elijah Menarik, quoted in Soroka, 1972).
>
> Indian children are discriminated against...teachers should have more respect for them (Roderick Bishop, quoted in Soroka, 1972).

Frustrations such as these have led to specific recommendations by Alberta Indians to Alberta Education regarding the selection of teachers. These recommendations include the use of Native teachers when possible, pre-service education and/or experience in a Native setting for non-Indian teachers, inservice teacher training in Native culture, special certification for teachers of Indian children, and letters of authority for Indian people who have

not completed their requirements for Alberta certification (Alberta Education, 1987). Some special teacher training for non-Indian teachers is available although not required for certification to teach in Indian schools.

The strangeness of the teachers is compounded by the strangeness of the culture represented by the curriculum. Recommendations of Indian people in this area (according to Alberta Education, 1987) include teaching Indian languages, developing curriculum materials relevant to Indian cultures, special programs for Indian children needing to learn English as a second language, a clearinghouse for Indian learning resources, and the development of Indian curriculum materials by Indian people.

Traditionally, the Indian concept of education is quite different from that of Canada's immigrant cultures. Education to the Indians was a continuing lifelong process of learning from the world, not a formal and structured institution. As Clive Linklater of the National Indian Brotherhood stated, "the Indian tribes did not have that strange whiteman's institution--a building labelled 'A School'!" (quoted in Assheton-Smith, Urion, 1977).

Because of this, school is often a strange and foreign experience to the Indian child. "The whole environment at school - the structure, the time orientation, the technology

is opposed to the home environment. The child is bewildered and frightened" (LaVallee, quoted in Soroka, 1972).

Historically, Canadian Native educational policy has been rooted in acculturation and assimilation. The emphasis has included attempts first to keep the Indians on the trap lines, then to bring them to Christianity, make them loyal subjects of the Crown, then into mainstream Canadian society, and now finally a developing awareness of their right to remain Indian.

The Policy Statement on Native Education in Alberta (1987) pledges to "provide opportunities for Native people to help guide and shape the education of their children" (p. 41). Alberta Education's handbook on Early Childhood Services lists as one of its eight goals, "to contribute to the involvement of parents...(by providing) a variety of ways for parents to take part in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs" (Alberta Education, 1984, p. 5).

My search of the "literature" (although admittedly not exhaustive) leaves me unsatisfied. It is rife with contradiction and paradox. The enlightened attitudes expressed in the recent reports and policy statements from Alberta Education speak of long overdue progress. And yet I am attending an Alberta university with so few Native students as to make their presence here almost invisible.

While the current rhetoric of the provincial powers is rich in recommendations for Native participation, involvement, consultation, and association, it is noticeably quiet on the issue of Native control. Many of the suggestions for the inclusion of Native culture in the curriculum take the form of "social studies" with the culture presented as artifact (Alberta Education, 1987). There is little evidence of any effort being devoted to developing more culturally sensitive styles of education.

Coming from a background in Early Childhood Education, where there is an abundant literature supporting the notion that form is more important than content (Piaget, Elkhind, Tough, Donaldson, to name only a few), I am puzzled by the lack of attention to this issue in Native education. After all, a western utilitarian style of education translated into Cree with Cree cultural artifacts is still a western utilitarian style of education.

Some of the liberal rhetoric of my research dates from the early 1970's. One particularly logical quote in the editors forward to The Anthropological Study of Education:

> We hope this will be part of an ever-growing movement to change the dominant conception of native Americans from one in which they are the objects of anthropological study and government action to one where they are the subjects of their

> own lives....Even more fundamentally, native Americans must be able to control education and the rest of purposeful action in their communities to an extent similar to the rest of the nation. (Calhoun & Ianni, 1976, p. 276).

With twelve years having passed since the publication of this statement, I wonder why is there not more evidence of progress.

I am moved by the words of Native people, but I am also struck by the scarcity of Native speaking in the literature I have examined. Even the document from Alberta Education entitled Native Education in Alberta: Alberta Native People's Views on Native Education had no Native words, no direct quotations from Native people.

A statistical nightmare. Finally, I am pounded by the statistics. Anyone need only look at the numbers for conclusive proof of what a complete failure public education has been for Native people. Native dropout rates are more than double those of non-natives. Natives graduate from university at less than one quarter the rate of non-natives. And these figures apply to the Canadian Native population as a whole; rural and northern statistics are much worse (Canada Statistics Canada, 1984).

I feel certain that were such statistics to apply to a white Canadian population, governments would topple, heads

would roll, and schools would burn. I don't understand. My search is resulting in far more questions than answers.

Paulo Freire, a people's advocate. In my classes and conversations with students and staff at the University of Alberta, I keep hearing the name Paulo Freire. He is mentioned in association with adult education, literacy, Marxism, critical theory, South American politics, third world development, Che Guevara, and revolutionary education. I am curious. My advisor loans me a book. I become a Paulo Freire junky. Within a month I read five of his books.

I am seduced by his logic and his passion. His arguments that education must originate from within a culture in order to be successful are convincing. His historical examinations of education as a tool for colonial oppression in South America are enlightening. And his work using adult literacy projects as a force for liberation from this oppression is inspiring (Freire, 1970, 1972, 1973, 1978, 1985).

There is certainly a relevance in Freire's work to the North American colonial and post colonial situation. An element of oppression seems undeniable when a people have become strangers and outsiders in their own land.

As a teacher in a multi-cultural society I can think of no more important project than the search for a better understanding of the "strangers" who are my students. My

intuition leads me to believe that what my students and I learn about each other is as important as what we learn of the "facts and knowledge" of the world.

Some Phenomenological Travelers Guide My Way

Schutz on the "face-to-face". I am faced now with a choice as to the path to take in search of this understanding. Here I seek advice from my fellow travelers, both alive and dead. Since my desire for this understanding is great I would like to follow the path which offers the greatest opportunity for success. If this understanding resides in the inner consciousness of the stranger, how may I best experience it?

According to Schutz (1970) the closest we can come to experiencing the thoughts of another is in the "face-to-face we-relationship." He explains that in this relationship the stranger and I are sharing both time and space together. I experience the stranger's "body as the field upon which play the symptoms of his inner consciousness" (p.184).

Schutz states that in face-to-face conversation our experiences of the world are, for the moment, "flowing side by side" and we are "growing old together" (1970, p.185). Even though we can never perfectly understand the thoughts of another, face-to-face conversation offers us the best opportunity for that understanding. Schutz (1970) describes such conversation:

> First of all I grasp the "objective meaning" of your words, the meaning which they would have had, had they been spoken by you or anyone else. But second, of course, there is the subjective meaning, namely, what is going on in your mind as you speak. In order to get to your subjective meaning, I must picture to myself your stream of consciousness as flowing side by side with my own. Within this picture I must interpret and construct your intentional Acts (sic) as you choose your words. To the extent that you and I can mutually experience this simultaneity, growing older together for a time, to the extent that we can live in it together, to that extent we can live in each other's subjective contexts of meaning. (p.187)

Certainly, not all face-to-face conversations result in the same levels of shared understanding. There is, in fact, a huge range of experiences with widely varying degrees of intimacy and understanding. Schutz (I suspect with tongue in cheek) offers this example:

> Compare, for instance, the knowledge two people have of each other in conversation with the knowledge they have of each other in sexual intercourse. What different degrees of intimacy

> occur here, what different levels of consciousness are involved! (1970, p.190)

With the strangers I meet during my journey along this path I hope for relationships that fall between these two extremes.

There is another characteristic of face-to-face conversation which is exceptional in providing a chance for better understanding the "other." Schutz says that one is "incomparably better attuned" to the other than to oneself. "I have never been face-to-face with myself...I have never caught myself in the act of actually living through an experience" (1970, p.191). Even were I to speak to myself in front of a mirror I would not see myself as others see me, but only the mirror image of my appearance.

Finally, there is the interactive quality of face-to-face conversation which enriches the experience almost beyond measure. Our knowledge of someone increases constantly while in their presence. As we converse with another we are aware that they are attentive to us and we respond to that attention in kind. Schutz (1970) explains:

> All these different encounters...are encounters with a human being as such, with this particular human being, and with this particular human being at this particular moment of time. And these meaning-contexts of mine will be "subjective" to the extent that I am attending to your actual

> conscious experiences themselves and not merely to my own lived experiences of you.... Furthermore, as I watch you, I shall see that you are oriented to me, that you are seeking the subjective meaning of my words....I will in turn take account of the fact that you are thus oriented to me, and this will influence both my intentions with respect to you and how I act toward you. This again you will see, I will see that you have seen it, and so on. This interlocking of glances, this thousand-faceted mirroring of each other, is one of the unique features of the face-to-face situation. (pp.191, 192)

Even though face-to-face conversation does not guarantee understanding, it provides what may be the best possible situation in which to search for that understanding. Although Schutz's arguments for this position are convincing, the strongest arguments come from the experience itself.

Merleau-Ponty on the "face-to-face". Merleau-Ponty (1964) examines this lived experience and comments on how the world itself demands that we seek some common understanding with those around us:

> If a friend and I are standing before a landscape, and if I attempt to show my friend something which I see and which he does not yet see, we cannot

> account for the situation by saying that I see something in my own world and that I attempt, by sending verbal messages, to give rise to an analogous perception in the world of my friend. There are not two numerically distinct worlds plus a mediating language which alone would bring us together. There is - and I know it very well if I become impatient with him - a kind of demand that what I see be seen by him also. And at the same time this communication is required by the very thing which I am looking at, by the reflections of sunlight upon it, by its color, by its sensible evidence. The thing imposes itself not as true for every intellect, but as real for every subject who is standing where I am. (p.17)

Merleau-Ponty (1964) makes the point that our perception of the world is not purely subjective, or totally random in its interpretations. Being in the presence of an-other creates a condition where the desire for understanding is fueled by the recognition of ourselves in each other:

> I will never know how you see red, and you will never know how I see it; but this separation of consciousnesses is recognised only after a failure of communication, and our first movement is to believe in an undivided being between us. There

is no reason to treat this primordial communication as an illusion, as the sensationalists do, because even then it would become inexplicable. And there is no reason to base it on our common participation in the same intellectual consciousness because this would suppress the undeniable plurality of consciousnesses. It is thus necessary that, in the perception of another, I find myself in relation with another "myself," who is, in principle, open to the same truths as I am, in relation to the same being that I am. And this perception is realized. From the depths of my subjectivity I see another subjectivity invested with equal rights appear, because the behavior of the other takes place within my perceptual field. I understand this behavior, the words of another; I espouse his thought because the other, born in the midst of my phenomena, appropriated them and treats them in accord with typical behaviors which I myself have experienced. Just as my body, as the system of all my holds on the world, founds the unity of the objects which I perceive, in the same way the body of the other - as the bearer of symbolic behaviors and of the behavior of true

> reality - tears itself away from being one of my phenomena, offers me the task of a true communication, and confers on my objects the new dimension of intersubjective being or, in other words, of objectivity. (pp.17,18)

You and I in the "face-to-face". Ultimately, we have only to examine our own everyday lives to gain some sense of the specialness of being face-to-face with another human being. There is a rich potential for communication which may be impossible to create in any other circumstance. Even our most commonplace experiences involve our whole bodies in the communication of meaning.

Who has not sat alone with a friend and found that much more understanding was shared (through eye contact, facial expressions, touch) than would have seemed possible with a few words exchanged? Have we not all, at some time, been hurt, elated, aroused, enraged, disappointed, crushed, or amused by the look in a loved one's eyes? As a child, did not the tone of our parent's voice convey as much meaning as the words? Even the position of a person's body (body language) can communicate their emotional state.

The people around us look happy, tired, angry, nervous, distracted, skeptical, relaxed, frightened, ecstatic, confused, contented, and dejected. Sometimes they have that "far away" look in their eyes. They mumble, mutter, yell,

scream, whisper, enunciate, and holler. They laugh, chuckle, giggle, snicker, chortle, titter, and even guffaw. And they cry, moan, whimper, and sob. Occasionally they just sigh.

Being face-to-face may not be everything but it is certainly a very rich thing. I feel certain that in many circumstances, if you want to understand, "you just have to be there." It is this notion, in both its logical and intuitive modes, that compels me to speak with those I wish to understand.

A closer examination of our relationships as strangers holds, at least, the possibility of breaking this "vicious circle" of misunderstanding. It does this by allowing us exposure to the lived experiences of the "others." Is not understanding the natural cure for misunderstanding? And what better place to look for understanding than in the lived experiences of these misunderstandings?

A fool rushes blindly in. It is at this point on my journey that I come to the always premature conclusion that I know where I want to go and how to get there. So, armed only with a tape recorder and a copy of Werner and Schoepfles' Systematic Fieldwork, Volumes I & II, I unleash myself on an unsuspecting group of honest, friendly, trusting, human beings. I have some wonderful conversations, share some great stories, some delicious meals, and some embarrassing moments. I talk, listen, laugh, cry, ramble on,

lose my tongue, feel nervous, feel at ease, hear stories of pain and joy, and say dumb things. I experience all of this, and more, while the tape recorder runs.

Fortunately for those with whom I share this experience (and in some sense unfortunately for the rapid progress of my masters thesis), I continue to read and seek guidance from fellow travelers along the way. Little do I know how much my path will change as I go along.

Some Human Science Travelers Guide My Way

Ethnographic methods of experiencing the face-to-face. Modern human science methodology utilizes a growing number of techniques which make an effort to go to the lived experience in one form or another. The various forms of ethnography take the researcher into the world of the others. These types of research have been a welcome relief from "the iron grip of the statistical methodologists" in educational studies (Wolcott, , p. 187).

The traditional anthropological ethnomethodology of rigorous description, while still a common and accepted practice, has spawned many new techniques. Notable among these are such approaches as participant observation, field studies, and case studies. The ethnographer attempts to observe and subsequently describe the "way of life" of a particular group of people. When successful this can result

in extremely rich and detailed pictures of other ways of living.

As a path toward understanding, traditional descriptive ethnography seems to fall short in several respects. In its classical form it can be almost Skinnerian in its assumption of the objectivity of the observer. Even attempts to address this shortcoming, such as participant observation (could this be a contradiction in terms?), fail to fully acknowledge the effect of the observer on the observed. This seems to be an inexcusable weakness in an era where quantum physicists have discovered that even subatomic particles behave differently when they are observed than when they are not.

Additionally, strong emphasis on description, although undeniably valuable, seems incomplete in offering an understanding of what is observed. Roland Barthes (1972) contends that ethnographers often ignore the historical situation of the "realities" they observe:

> Faced with anything foreign, the Established Order knows only two types of behavior, which are both mutilating: either to acknowledge it as a Punch and Judy show, or to defuse it as a pure reflection of the West. In any case, the main thing is to deprive it of its history. (p. 96)

I believe that this tendency of observers to attribute to others motives and world views which parallel their own is

a common failure of ethnographers to recognize the alternate and valid realities of the cultures they observe. It seems to be an egotistically distorted form of anthropomorphising ("suipomorphising?") where we ascribe to others the characteristics of ourselves.

A Cree friend recounted an incident which exemplifies this type of misunderstanding. He said that there was a little girl in his community who had not been to school for a number of days. The white teacher became concerned that the child might be ill and called the home to inquire. The mother told the teacher that her daughter was fine but that she simply did not want to go to school. The teacher was outraged and commented to all who would listen on what a poor and irresponsible parent the girl's mother must be not to care enough about her child's welfare to make her attend school.

My friend explained to me that traditionally the Cree do not consider children to be the possessions of the parents but rather to be people with rights of their own. The mother does not have the right to force her daughter to attend school. Therefore, in the Cree reality, the mother was not being a poor and uncaring parent. She was being a good parent by respecting the rights of her child to choose her own way.

Wolcott (1987) makes what I believe to be a common error of assumption about ethnography when he describes descriptive research as "portraying how things really are" (p. 203). I believe it would be more accurate to say that ethnography portrays (and often quite richly) how things appear.

Many researchers are doing creative and interesting work in these new, at least new to educational research, methodologies. Shirley Brice Heath's (1983) ethnographic study of language and Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1976) work on the ecology of human development are examples of attempts to return to "life and living" in the study of human science.

My intention here is not to deny the appropriateness, value, or even necessity, of ethnography and other related methods of research. Rather my belief is that if one's goal is understanding, then these methods, at least in their traditional forms, are simply not enough.

Narratives as ways of understanding. One way in which ethnography fails to achieve its potential as a route toward better understanding is in its failure to fully realize the power of the narrative. Strong evidence is emerging throughout the human sciences which seems to point to narrative as, not only a powerful, but perhaps even a fundamental, way of knowing, living, and understanding.

Donald Polkinghorne, in his work Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences, provides an enlightening survey of the role of narrative in expression, history, literature, psychology, and human existence (1988). Although it is certainly interesting and revealing to examine the narrative themes contained in our history and literature (pp. 37-100), the real potential of narrative begins to take shape when we consider the ways in which these themes shape and define our reality (pp. 100-160). To what extent our narratives shape our daily life, influence our choices, opinions, and even our relationships to time and space, is an exciting area of investigation.

Oliver Sacks (1985) gives a moving account of what could possibly be described as a "narratively handicapped" young girl. Our tendency to see others only in relationship to our own familiar forms and structures can blind us to other ways of being. Sacks describes his first encounter with Rebecca:

> When I first saw her - clumsy, uncouth, all-of-a-fumble - I saw her merely, or wholly, as a casualty, a broken creature, whose neurological impairments I could pick out and dissect with precision: a multitude of apraxias and agnosias, a mass of sensorimotor impairments and breakdowns, limitations of intellectual schemata and concepts similar (by Piaget's criteria) to those of a child

> of eight. A poor thing, I said to myself, with perhaps a "splinter skill", a freak gift, of speech; a mere mosaic of higher cortical functions, Piagetian schemata - most impaired. (p. 170)

As teachers we all too frequently see a child in this type of decontextualized, objective, even pathological, way. Sacks is fortunate to see Rebecca again in her own context and he "sees" a quite different Rebecca:

> The next time I saw her, it was all very different. I didn't have her in a test situation, "evaluating" her in a clinic. I wandered outside, it was a lovely spring day, with a few minutes in hand before the clinic started, and there I saw Rebecca sitting on a bench, gazing at the April foliage quietly, with obvious delight. Her posture had none of the clumsiness which had so impressed me before. Sitting there, in a light dress, her face calm and slightly smiling, she suddenly brought to mind one of Chekov's young women - Irene, Anya, Sonya, Nina - seen against the backdrop of a Chekovian cherry orchard. She could have been any young woman enjoying a beautiful spring day. This was my human, as opposed to my neurological, vision.(p.171)

It was through his "human vision" that he gained access to Rebecca's other possibilities.

This access in turn enabled him to see the other ways (music, drama) through which Rebecca could organize her life. These narrative structures provided form and pattern, the absence of which had been characteristic of her difference. Through his experience with Rebecca, Sacks began to realize the underlying necessity of narrative as an organizational structure of our lives (1985).

With Native North American cultures we must be aware of the different roles narratives may play. Terry Tafoya (1984) says that "One of the functions of Native American legends is to provide 'schemes' or models of behavior for tribal members," and that these "legends and stories form the basis for traditional teaching paradigms" (p. 23). They do this in a different manner than traditional western european stories: they do not explicitly state the moral or lesson of the story. Instead the listeners are expected to claim the message of the story for themselves, thereby making the lesson their own (Tafoya, 1984).

Perhaps here most of all, standing in contemplation of the primary relationships of our narratives to who we are, and how we live, learn, see, hear, speak, touch, smell, love, hate, and think the world, one is confronted with the

undeniable power of the "word," particularly those "words" as the basic units of the language in which we think.

Narrative opens the question of language. It is in the light of narrative that we begin to experience the potentially paramount importance of language. This consideration opens up questions about the relationship of language to thought (Can one think like a Cree in English?; If a language is lost, is a way of life also lost?).

Merleau-Ponty (1962) alludes to this relationship between who we are and language:

> The perceiving subject is not this absolute thinker; rather, it functions according to a natal pact between our body and the world, between ourselves and our body. Given a perpetually new natural and historical situation to control, the perceiving subject undergoes a continued birth; at each instant it is something new. Every incarnate subject is like an open notebook in which we do not yet know what will be written. Or it is like a new language; we do not know what works it will accomplish but only that, once it has appeared, it cannot fail to say little or much, to have a history and a meaning. The very productivity or freedom of human life, far from denying our situation, utilises it and turns it into a means of

> expression. It also follows that perhaps, taken piece by piece, language does not yet contain its meaning, that all communication supposes in the listener a creative re-enactment of what is heard. Language leads us to a thought which is no longer ours alone, to a thought which is presumptively universal, though this is never the universality of a pure concept which would be identical for every mind. It is rather the call which a situated thought addresses to other thoughts, equally situated, and each one responds to the call with its own resources. (p. 8-10)

There is a fair amount of linguistic and psychological research in the area of language and thought (Sapir & Whorf among others) which I need to explore. In the meantime, my intuitive thoughts lead me to believe that a culture whose word for Magpie translates as "one who sits smiling at excrement" may be "thinking" the world in a different way from my own (Hill, 1979, p. 1086).

Although certainly these are complex questions, they can neither be ignored nor treated lightly when considering their vast implications for education in a multi-cultural world. Indeed, the history of colonialism's use of language as a tool for assimilation speaks compellingly to this need.

If the implications and potential significance of narrative are acknowledged, then the "stories" and informal conversations I have recorded become very important indeed. A more responsible way of treating these "stories" must be sought and I must examine my role and responsibility in this regard.

The sharing of my journeying. Certainly, the phenomenological experiences of speaking-listening, seeing-being seen, hearing-being heard, along with the shared time and space which is characteristic of the face-to-face relationship can go a long way toward satisfying a personal desire to understand. Yet somehow this process seems to be incomplete without the additional possibility of sharing this understanding with others. There is a selfishness, self-servingness, even a loneliness, to the notion of understanding without attempting to communicate this understanding with others.

This need to communicate results in the creation of a text, and the offering of that text to a reader. The very act of writing speaks of the writer's conviction that text has the power to communicate understanding. Reciprocally, the act of reading speaks of the reader's belief in the possibility of understanding communicated through text. This relationship leaves open an opportunity for that understanding.

If we accept the idea that the process of understanding between people is a shared process, then the partners in this process must share the responsibility for the success or failure of the process. In the case of a text, the understanding is not contained in the words inscribed on the paper. Because the reader and the writer are removed from each other, there is no direct dialogue. Most of the contextual clues which are available in face-to-face conversation are lacking in a text.

Amazingly enough however, this does not render the text impotent. The powers of the text are not more or less than those of face-to-face conversation, they are only different. Absence is the other half of presence and it gives new powers to the text, as well as new responsibilities to the writer/reader. Text re-members what was spoken long after the speaker is gone. Text speaks over time and distance to an unlimited number of listeners.

Some Hermeneutical Travelers Guide My Way

Presence is not enough. A relationship between presence-being-living and absence-text-life seems not only logical but unavoidable. Like the writer and the reader, they depend on each other and give each other meaning. The circularity of this interdependence has no beginning or end, one does not precede the other. The writer writes because of

the reader; the reader reads because of the writer. They do so in the absence of each other's presence, and in the presence of each other's absence.

The nature of this experience requires not only that I try to make myself understood to the reader, but also that I attempt to foster some understanding of those whose presence I have shared during this experience. Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" offers hope here. If, through my face-to-face conversations, I am able to experience the horizons of others, then these others may become part of my own horizon. And if my text can re-present my experience to the reader, then at least a sharing, if not a fusion, of all our horizons is possible.

Even though I, as the writer, cannot ultimately control the reader's understanding, this does not absolve me from responsibility in this regard. Rather the opposite seems to true. This ultimate lack of control mandates an ever increasing effort from the writer to be understood. And again this relationship is reciprocal. The reader's ultimate lack of access to the mind of the writer requires an unceasing effort toward understanding. The possibility of understanding remains always open as long as this partnership is unbroken.

Heidegger, "Jaws". In looking at hermeneutics, one cannot ignore Martin Heidegger, no matter how much one might

like to. His influence is undeniable. His voracious logic in his pre-World War II An Introduction to Metaphysics pulls us under and devours our very existence (1955).

The literature contains not only the corpus of his own work but also an unending stream of references to his work by other authors. It seems that it is extremely fashionable to cite him even though it is almost impossible to understand him. Perhaps this is appropriate, since to understand Heidegger would, to some extent, refute his life's work. As John Caputo says in Radical Hermeneutics (1987):

> The task of this more exotic hermeneutics that we find in the later Heidegger is to keep open to the mystery as a mystery, a mystery which sustains us and is the unencompassable source of scientific and prescientific life. (p.108)

Although I sense brilliance in his writing, he does not fully engage me. I feel the power of his intellect and logic, but I feel little humanness. His work is too much of the mind and too little of the body. I believe that his real contribution to hermeneutics lies in the work his writings have provoked, and continue to provoke. From Gadamer to Derrida his influence is profound.

Gadamer, a voice of reason. Hans-Georg Gadamer, in Truth and Method (1975), brings Heidegger to the world. With Gadamer we begin to see the practical power of hermeneutics.

He takes hermeneutics into the lived history and traditions of people. He explores how we embody those traditions and pass them on through the generations. He attempts to expose as a myth the notion of the disinterested and unprejudiced investigator or observer (in the human sciences).

His concept of "the prejudice against prejudice" has great implications in the human sciences (and arguably in the natural sciences as well) in developing appropriate methodologies (pp.240-256). For why should we devote such energy and intellect toward the attainment of complete objectivity if, in fact, complete objectivity is neither possible nor desirable?

To be sure Gadamer (1975) would have us avoid the prejudices of "over-hastiness," but not at the expense of ignoring authentic prejudices (p.246). Prejudices are not necessarily negative and false. Some of our prejudices contain the traditional "truths" passed to us through history. They are part of us and we cannot separate ourselves from them. It is against the background of our pre-judgments that we can make our re-judgments. We are not capable of constantly thinking the world anew.

If I stand on top of a five story building and look over the edge, my prejudice tells me that if I were to jump I would surely die -- this in spite of the fact that historically there are many accounts of people surviving such

falls. People have fallen from airplanes into lakes or snow banks and had only minor injuries. They have jumped from burning buildings and landed in shrubbery or piles of refuse and walked away.

And yet it would simply not be practical (or wise) for me to ignore my prejudice and jump. Certainly, I could examine the statistical probability of my survival and make an enlightened decision based on my 99.998% likelihood of injury, but this is also impractical. My ability to live my life and accomplish my daily tasks depends to a large degree on my acceptance of the truth of my prejudices.

Gadamer's is a practical hermeneutics which operates under the assumption of fundamental truth passed down through history. Even though he acknowledges that there is no one absolute interpretation of this truth, he is certain that truth exists. Gadamer (1975) gives us a hermeneutics we can go to work with:

> Thus the meaning of the connection with tradition, ie the element of tradition in our historical, hermeneutical attitude, is fulfilled in the fact that we share fundamental prejudices with tradition. Heimeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a relation to the object that comes into language in the transmitted text and has, or

> acquires, a connection with the tradition out of which the text speaks. On the other hand, hermeneutical consciousness is aware that it cannot be connected with this object in some self evident, questioned way, as is the case with the unbroken stream of a tradition. There is a polarity of familiarity and strangeness on which hermeneutic work is based: only that this polarity is not to be seen, psychologically, with Schleiermacher, as the tension that conceals the mystery of individuality, but truly hermeneutically, i.e., in regard to what has been said: The language in which the text addresses us, the story that it tells us. Here too there is a tension. The place between strangeness and familiarity that a transmitted text has for us is that intermediate place between an (sic) historically intended separate object and being part of a tradition. The true home of hermeneutics is in this intermediate area. (pp.262-263)

It strikes me that there is a pragmatism in Gadamer with some similarities to Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty (1962) seems to say that yes, there is a pre-reflective, pre-lingual, even pre-perceptual, living of the world. He states that "The world is always 'already there' before reflection

begins (p.vii)." However, since our only access to the world is through our physical perceptions, and our language rooted reflections of these perceptions, then these perceptions are the appropriate topics for our thought:

> We must not, therefore, wonder whether we really perceive a world, we must instead say: the world is what we perceive. To seek the essence of perception is to declare that perception is, not presumed true, but defined as access to truth. (p.xvi)

Gadamer (1975), in a similar vein, says that even though there is no absolute definition of truth, the historical life of the world depends on the assumption of truths passed down through tradition. Therefore, historically (within the horizons of our traditions), that truth exists. Both Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer concede the probability of a world beyond our horizons. However, they make the practical decision to deal with the world within our horizons, the world to which we have access. Our task is to get on with the unending task of interpreting it.

Ricoeur, a voice of possibility. Methodologically, this practical hermeneutics is further developed by Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur (1978) points to another path toward understanding. He does this by refuting the traditional placing of explanation and understanding in opposite camps:

explanation being appropriate to the natural sciences, with understanding as the goal of the human sciences. He does this by proposing a dialectic between explanation and understanding; "By dialectic, I understand the view that explanation and understanding would not constitute mutually exclusive poles, but rather relative moments in a complex process called interpretation" (p.150).

Ricoeur (1978) speculates that this is not only beneficial but natural. In face-to-face conversation, when the listener does not understand, an explanation is often requested of the speaker. And this explanation may lead to a better understanding. This is the richness I find in Schutz's face-to-face relationship. However, this dialogue is not possible with the written text since it is removed from its "initial link with the intention of the author, with the original audience, and with the situation common to the parties" (p.153).

Despite this absence from the original dialogue, Ricoeur (1978) contends that the dialectic is still possible. He states that the structural analysis of the narrative form contained in the discourse can fulfill the explanatory roll of the dialectic. "This exteriorization into material marks, and this inscription in the codes of discourse, make not only possible but necessary the mediation of understanding by explanation" (p.153).

And this relationship is again reciprocal. Explanation alone causes the story to be "stripped of its actuality as an event of discourse and reduced to the state of a variable in a system which has no other existence than that of a unified ensemble of permissions and prohibitions. Now we must take the opposite path, from the virtual to the actual, from system to event, from language to speech" (p. 154). According to Ricoeur (1978), this return of the story to the living tradition is required because:

> What motive does the analyst have in looking for the signs of the narrator and the listener in the text of the story itself, if not the understanding which envelops all of the analytic steps and places the narrative back into a movement of transmission, into a living tradition, as a story told by someone to someone?" (p. 154)

The promise of this dialectic is that it offers a path, "an interpretive arc which goes from naive understanding through explanation to knowledgeable understanding" (p. 154).

This dialectic approach begins to point to understanding as possible and perhaps even attainable goal. But, alas, "just when I thought it was safe to go back in the water..."

Derrida, "Jaws II". Jacques Derrida (1983) brings us once more before the power/powerlessness of the text. He confronts us with his intriguing and disturbing neographism,

"diffe'rance." In this word-concept, he combines what he believes are two essential characteristics of text (words, signs, language): first, that meaning is always different from the text and second, that meaning is always deferred by the text (p. 3-4).

Derrida's (1983) work is a radical expansion of the work of Saussure, Hegel, and Heidegger among others. He views text and language in a way which seems to me to be almost a "quantum physics" where the "traces" of our words move without our control through time and space (1983). He and other deconstructionists would change the way we see the "texts" of life by making us always aware that the "signifier" never delivers the "signified," "Our words do not 'stand for' their meanings; they 'stand in for' them" (Mackey, 1983, p.256-257).

I can conceive of a writer who can write with such skill as to almost recreate a "lived experience" such as a delicious meal. The words can cause my mouth to water, my stomach to growl, and my senses to smell and taste the odors and flavors described. And yet no matter how strongly the meal is evoked, I will not gain weight.

Derrida (1983) would have us be aware of this "diffe'rance" as not a weakness but a power of language, a positive as well as negative power. When examined

deconstructively, the text reveals meanings far beyond the intentions of the author.

An insignificant little word. An article titled "The Sun is Shining in My Eyes: The Navajo Child Enters Kindergarten Expecting to Write and He Can" (Boloz & Jenness, 1984) describes an interesting piece of research on early literacy. The study explores the expectations and accomplishments of a group of young Navajo children involved in an early reading-writing program.

As I read the article I sense a strong and caring advocacy for the children in the words of the authors. The results of the study are positive and hopeful. The children read and the children write and there is joy in the process.

Then I come to the opening sentence of the "Conclusion" section of the article, "Even Navajo children enter kindergarten that first day with the anticipation that they will learn to read and write" (p. 29). The word attacks me without warning, "Even"! It speaks with a voice of its own. It comes from a history of low, and no, expectations for Navajo children. It speaks from a racist attitude which the authors themselves purport to dispel! It rings in my mind long after the rest of the words have receded into my memory. I wonder, "Is there such a thing as an insignificant word?"

Hugh Silverman (1987) expresses this power of text:

> the text is not that which is interpreted but rather the domain in which the interpretation occurs. It is the space of both writing and reading. The network of sign systems, codes, systems of knowledge production, but also frames, margins, edges, limits, and borders. The text is self-circumscribing. Its outside (pre texts, con texts, inter texts) implies its inside. At the hinge or borderline between the two, at the meeting place of the oppositional relation, the reading of writing and the writing of a reading take place (pp. 17-18).

The Unendingness of the Path

A relationship to the infinite. For the sake of practicality, many of the travelers along this path (Bertram Fontz, Gadamer, Ricoeur) have chosen to ignore (although not deny) the infinite in order to get on with the work of interpreting the finite. The pragmatic logic of this stance is obvious: we can only do what it is possible to do.

I believe that it may be equally important that, as we travel this path, we also listen to those who remind us of the infinite. Heidegger (1962), in his later work, does this when he draws the line through "being" and abandons horizonal hermeneutics in order to look beyond the horizon. Derrida

also does this by exposing us to the unending play of the texts, forever in flux.

For it is the infinite to which all things are ultimately relative. What is unseen is always infinitely greater than what is seen. What is unsaid is always infinitely greater than what is said. And what is unknown is always infinitely greater than what is known. It is the infinite which defines our equality as human beings. We all become equally significant in the universe through our equal and infinite insignificance.

Douglas Adams (1986) presents a whimsically profound look at our relationship to the infinite in The Hitch-hikers Guide to the Galaxy: A Trilogy in Four Parts. The "Guide" defines:

> Infinite: Bigger than the biggest thing ever and then some. Much bigger than that in fact, really amazingly immense, a totally stunning size, real "wow, that's big" time. Infinity is just so big that by comparison, bigness itself looks really titchy. Gigantic multiplied by colossal multiplied by staggeringly huge is the sort of concept we're trying to get across here. (p. 245)

A statement on the population of the universe addresses our numerical relationship to the infinite:

> It is known that there are an infinite number of worlds, simply because there is an infinite amount of space for them to be in. However, not every one of them is inhabited. Therefore, there must be a finite number of inhabited worlds. Any finite number divided by infinity is as near to nothing as makes no odds, so the average population of all the planets in the Universe can be said to be zero. From this it follows that the population of the whole Universe is also zero, and that any people you may meet from time to time are merely the products of a deranged imagination. (p. 245)

In addition to these compellingly logical statements on our ultimate insignificance, Adams (1986) also offers an interesting perspective on the interdependence of the finite and the infinite. He describes a character's feelings as he enters a spherical room 3,000,000 miles in diameter:

> Suddenly Arthur had a fairly clear idea of what infinity looked like. It wasn't infinity in fact. Infinity itself looks flat and uninteresting. Looking up into the night sky is looking into infinity - distance is incomprehensible and therefore meaningless. The chamber into which the aircar emerged was anything but infinite, it was just very very very big, so big that it gave the

> impression of infinity far better than infinity itself. (p. 115)

The walls which limited the size of this huge chamber also created a scale which hinted at the vastness beyond. In a similar way the limits of our known horizons provide the scale for our contemplation of the unknown. In a curious sense, the fact that we are so small because the universe is so big is balanced by the fact the universe is so big because we are so small.

It is the notion that our infinitely small understanding of our world, and the strangers in it, is balanced by an infinitely great possibility for understanding that I find so exceedingly optimistic. Merleau-Ponty (1967) expresses a view on the unavoidable, but not hopeless, subjectivity of knowledge which I believe is relevant here. He states:

> Thus perception and thought have this much in common - that both of them have a future horizon and a past horizon and that they appear to themselves as temporal, even though they do not move at the same speed nor in the same time. We must say that at each moment our ideas express not only the truth but also our capacity to attain it at that given moment. Skepticism begins if we conclude from this that our ideas are always false. But this can only happen with reference to some

> idol of absolute knowledge. We must say, on the contrary, that our ideas, however limited they may be at a given moment - since they always express our contact with being and with culture - are capable of being true provided we keep them open to the field of nature and culture which they must express. And this possibility is always open to us, just because we are temporal. The idea of going straight to the essence of things is an inconsistent idea if one thinks about it. What is given is a route, an experience which gradually clarifies itself, which gradually rectifies itself and proceeds by dialogue with itself and with others. Thus what we tear away from the dispersion of instants is not an already-made reason; it is, as has always been said, a natural light, our openness to something. What saves us is the possibility of a new development, and our power of making even what is false, true - by thinking through our errors and replacing them within the domain of truth. (p.21)

There appears to be a necessary, even though seemingly paradoxical, partnership at work here. Both the hermeneutic, "I cannot perfectly understand," and the phenomenological, "understanding resides within the infinite possibilities of

lived experience" may be needed to create the desire and the hope for better understanding.

We are forever, at least to some degree, a "stranger" to others and they to us. I believe that to acknowledge that I do not understand, and can never perfectly understand, another is fundamental to the journey toward understanding. It is this acknowledgement which releases an insatiable desire to understand "better," and also holds open a theoretically infinite possibility for this understanding.

A possibly analogous parable. Red is the color of understanding. Perfect red is the color of perfect understanding. I am sitting in a room which measures 20 feet by 20 feet with a ten foot ceiling height. The room is filled to a depth of five feet with marbles. The marbles range in color from a very pale pink to what appears to be a deep red. No two of the marbles are exactly the same color but all are shades of red. There are thousands upon thousands of marbles. My task is to find the perfect red; the richest, darkest red marble in the room.

As I look directly in front of me I can see hundreds of marbles within my arm's reach. I quickly pick up a very red marble. This is surely the reddest of reds. I cannot imagine a more red marble. I am pleased with myself for accomplishing my task so quickly and I place the "perfect" red marble safely in my pocket.

I begin to look around for an exit from the room when my eyes are drawn to another extremely red marble. I pick it up and examine it more closely. Upon comparing it with the marble from my pocket I am amazed to discover that this second marble is even redder than the first. I also feel lucky to have discovered my error and to have found the actual perfect red marble before leaving the room. Or have I? Is this actually and truly the reddest marble?

My confidence is shaken and I feel I must make a more systematic search in order to verify my assumption. I separate out a section of the room by making a furrow with my hand and I begin to look at the marbles on one side of the furrow and move them to the other side after careful examination. Each time I find a marble which is more red than the one in my pocket (and this seems to happen with surprising frequency) I replace the less red one with the more red one.

Because the marbles are so slippery I cannot keep some of the already examined marbles from sliding back in with the unexamined ones as I dig deeper and deeper. Sometimes I pick up a marble and I am almost certain that it is one I had in my pocket some hours earlier. I am then embarrassed to think that I once thought that this marble was the perfect red marble when there were so many obviously more red marbles in the room. How naive I was.

I persevere. My diligence somewhat makes up for my imperfect methodology. I work my way across the room examining every marble to the best of my ability. After many hours of careful searching I come to the last corner of the room and work my way through these last marbles. Even though I have replaced the marble in my pocket (the perfect red marble) thousands of times, I am now near the end of my search and success is at hand.

Upon examining the last marble I notice the seams of a small door in the wall I have just exposed. What good fortune that at the successful completion of my task I should also find the exit from the room! So, with the "perfect red marble" in hand, and an incredible feeling of accomplishment in my heart, I open the door to leave the room.

I am stunned by what I see when I open the door. The door is not an exit but an entry into another chamber. It is huge. It is as large as a coliseum. And it is filled with red marbles, a sea of red marbles. Carl Sagan would have trouble grasping the number of red marbles in this room. When I look closely I notice that the marbles, although different shades of red, all appear to be slightly darker, slightly richer, a slightly more "perfect red" than the marble I have in my pocket.

I am daunted by the thought that I will never find the "perfect red marble", but I am excited, almost euphoric, to

realize that, as long as I continue to search, I will always be able to find ever "more perfect" red marbles. This feeling is accompanied by a sense of awe as I perceive the distant walls of this chamber. I am uncomfortably, but not unpleasantly, aware that what is outside is always infinitely greater than what is inside.

Where Can I Go Now?

A moral, ethical, and methodological imperative. My journeying to this point has resulted in a conviction that I may never be able to do enough. Nevertheless, this is not a paralyzing realization. Instead it fosters a continuing necessity to do more.

Since no one methodology can result in the understanding I seek, I must use multiple methodologies. I am not, however, suggesting a "shotgun approach" where everything is tried in the hope that one thing will work. This is a common approach in education with less than satisfactory results.

Some new ways of combining methodologies. There are voices in the human sciences who call for a combining of methodologies and genres. Phenomenology - hermeneutics (Silverman, 1987), human science - natural science (Toulmin, 1983), biography - life history - ethnography (Darnell, 1988), and oral narrative performance - dialogical anthropology (Tedlock, 1983, 1987) are some of those voices.

Dennis Tedlock's work provides a practical example of an

expanded methodology. Tedlock (1987) through his fascinating work with oral narratives gives us an example of a more careful and caring way to present (re-present) the narratives of others. Tedlock does this through his strong efforts to re-contextualize the story telling performance of Zuni and Quiche-Mayan narrators, and to keep those stories always in dialogue with his own. He believes this dialogue to be a necessary, but usually absent, element in the interpretation of oral narratives. He states, "Even when a few native lines do appear, they seem to have been inserted for the sake of illustrating some point the writer was already trying to make, the very reverse of hermeneutics" (p.325).

Tedlock (1987) concedes that there exists a literature of native stories in anthropology but finds the relationship of the anthropologist and the native speaker a strange one:

> When the anthropologists do get around to letting the others speak, they suddenly disappear from the scene, as if no one had been in the field asking for the myths or life histories and recording them. There's is a kind of apartheid here; it's as if anthropologists would not allow the natives to be articulate between the same two covers where they themselves were trying to be articulate. (p.326)

Tedlock points out that the relationship exists and has an effect on the "data" the anthropologist collects:

> The point is that whatever the ultimate power relationship between the society of the ethnographer and that of the others, the others may nevertheless take a strong role in determining what the dialogue will be about. More likely than not they will insist on long excursions into matters that have nothing to do with the original plan of research that got the grant or the promise of publication that brought someone into the field. (p.335)

In the course of my journeying it has appeared to me that the path of the dialogue flows from the desires of the speakers. And this need not be viewed as a negative occurrence. These desires are capable of communicating on a level of their own. What a speaker is moved to speak about may communicate understanding far better than that speaker's answers to some specific questions.

The importance of not only acknowledging a dialogue, but encouraging it seems twofold. First, it recognizes the fact that in addition to learning about others we learn from them. And second, that what we learn from others influences how we interpret and understand what we learn about them.

A complimentarity of methods. What I am proposing is a complementarity of methods which may result in a degree of understanding impossible to achieve with a single methodology. And I suggest that the choice of these methods is not completely arbitrary. It appears to me that there is an almost "symbiotic" complementarity among many of the human science methodologies.

In order to understand (re-construct) an "other" (stranger) we may first need to examine the other's language, in both the formal structures (linguistics) and the phenomenological way in which that language can "sing the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1973, p. xvi). We may need to look at rich descriptions (ethnographies) of the culture, including its art, music, written and oral narratives, in which the other lives. And we may need to study the historical evolution of that culture (classical anthropology, archaeology). By doing this we attempt to re-situate/re-contextualize the others. It may be necessary to engage in a dialogue with the others so that we may learn from and with them. It is in this dialogue that the phenomenological "experiencing, living" and the hermeneutical "understanding, interpreting" can compliment each other. Finally (in a limited sense only) we might create a text which is artful and phenomenological in its power to describe and evoke, and hermeneutical in its power to interpret. And if we are clear

in our intentions we may share a better understanding of the strangers (who are the "others" and ourselves) with a reader who is more open to that understanding.

A tentative step. I come now to a fellow traveler. He is an old friend and a stranger. I speak of him here not because I know him in a complete or even adequate way. I speak of him because with Matthew I believe I have at least opened the doorway into the second chamber of red marbles. So I offer the reader the beginning of a story about Matthew and me. I offer it as my first tentative experience with a new way of journeying.

A Stranger Met Along the Way

Matthew

Brief life history.

Matthew is a Taos Pueblo Indian. He is twenty five years old and was born in Taos Pueblo, New Mexico. His first language is Pueblo (Tanoan), his second is English. He speaks only a little Spanish.

The Pueblo are descended from the Anasazi (the first people). The land where the Anasazi lived is spectacularly beautiful. It is an area including southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, a land of snow capped mountains and desert plains. There are hundreds of remote unexcavated ruins on remote mesa tops throughout this area which attest to their rich history and culture.

Taos Pueblo has its back to the mountains and its face toward the plains. A story of how Matthew's ancestors came to be in Taos Pueblo goes like this:

> All the Indians were created by Our Father the Sun and placed in a lake in Mt. Blanca. The Earth, Our Mother took care of us. The Sun told each tribe where it had to live. He told them to leave Mt. Blanca and go to the plains and to the mountains where they now live....The Taos Indians left the lake in Mt. Blanca by groups or clans and

all with their different names. But they all had to meet and build their pueblo at the place called the Canon of the Red Willows at the foot of the Great Mountain....The Taos Indians came out of the lake in Mt. Blanca one clan after the other and each had its name already. The ones who came out first were the Fiadaina (Feather People). They travelled rapidly and first built their pueblo on a hill near Ranchos de Taos. The ruins are still there and the Taos Indians call them Fiadai dhe puanaya (place where the Fiadaina lived). Here the Fiadaina lived for many years, but this was not the promised land. After the Fiadaina came the Haldaina (Shell People) and settled for a while near the Colorado (Red) River....The two groups realized they were the same people and lived together. Taos today identifies these two sites as the Pot Creek and Ponce de Leon ruins. Then the Bodaina (Water People) came out. They were first fish. They came over the mountain streams to the Santa Fe River. Then they swam up the Rio Grande and up the Taos River to the Ranchos de Taos creek until they arrived near the place where the Fiadainas and the Haldaina were living together. The fish became people after a ceremonial whipping.

> They are called water people because first they were fish and lived in the water. Their site is given by the Taos today as a ruin east of that at Pot Creek.
>
> And then these three peoples or clans went to live at Mahwolu Vianda, the place where all the Taos Indians now live. They were here joined by the Big Earring people, then the Dagger people, then the Sun people, then the People of Feathers in Cold Weather, then the Big Eagle's Feather, then the Lightning people, then the Day people, last to arrive. (in Ellis & Dunham, 1974, p. 37-38)

This account of their origin was given by Aurelio Espinosa in 1936 and combines the mythical with the then current geographical and archaeological facts.

The history of Pueblo Indians since the coming of the first Spanish explorers in the early sixteenth century is well recorded. Taos Pueblo figures prominently, and often violently, in that history. The Spaniards first encountered strong hostility from the Zuni but persisted with force. In 1598 Juan de Onate divided the Pueblo country into districts and sent Catholic priests as missionaries to convert the Pueblos. In the early seventeenth century churches and monasteries were built throughout the region in order to concentrate the Pueblos and facilitate their

Christianization. This expansion of the Spanish missions continued until 1680 when the Pueblos revolted led by Pope, a San Juan Indian who was living in Taos Pueblo. The missions were destroyed (21 of 33 missionaries, and 375 of 2350 Spanish colonists were killed) and the Spanish retreated (Ellis & Dunham, 1974).

In 1692 Diego de Vargas once again conquered and subdued the Pueblos. Again in 1696 Taos Pueblo revolted and killed some missionaries and settlers but were defeated and punished by de Vargas. After this time things remained fairly peaceful between the Spanish and the Pueblos. Spanish officials established a land grant for Taos Pueblo and acted in ways to protect this grant from Spanish settlers (Ellis & Dunham, 1974).

After Mexico's independence from Spain was declared in 1821, more disputes over the land rights began to arise. The long peace was violated in 1847 when Taos Pueblo Indians, along with some Mexican settlers, killed a group of Americans, including Governor Charles Bent. This resulted in strong retaliation against the Pueblo with 150 Indians killed and many hanged (Ellis & Dunham, 1974).

Ethnological work (Miller, 1898; Parsons, 1936) describe a culture which, although evidencing many influences of coexistence with Spanish and American settlers, remains rich in its pre-Spanish heritage. Elsie Clews Parsons (1936)

presents a yearly calendar of events and rituals which includes, to name only a few:

> Bear People's Ceremony, Children's Dance and Procession of the Saints, Play of the Black Eyes and Deer Dance, Turtle Dance, Buffalo Dance, Navajo Dance, Kiva Night Dances, One Day Spring Time Ceremony, Saint's Day Dance, Parade of Saints, Summer Rain Ceremonial, Ipa'w'imeho (The Lake Go), Old Feather Dance (pp. 83-101)

It is interesting to note that Parsons (1936) comments at the end of her work in a section titled "Attitudes and Trends" that the Taos Pueblo Indians are destined to be overwhelmed and absorbed by Mexican and Catholic influences. She states:

> How soon? Shall we say fifty years, mas or menos? Whatever the rate of change, the coming years should not pass unobserved by the ethnologist. May he be alert to take advantage of that psychological moment in the passing of the generations when the customs are still remembered, but little practiced, and a few old men are willing and even pleased to reminisce. (p. 120)

It is now 63 years since Parsons left Taos, in 1926, and I suspect she would be surprised, and I hope pleased, to discover how little of her pessimistic prediction has come to pass. Virtually all of the rituals and events I listed above

are still in observance at Taos Pueblo and I believe my story of Matthew may demonstrate that Taos Pueblo Indians are still the people who came out of the lake at Blanca Mountain.

Matthew is tall, strong, and handsome. He has the most incredibly beautiful waist length black hair. Women melt in his presence. Matthew doesn't seem to notice. He is calm. Watching him move is like looking into an aquarium; it makes your blood pressure go down.

Matthew's house in the pueblo has belonged to his family "forever." Perhaps as long as five hundred years anyway. Tribal law prohibits electricity and inside plumbing in the ancient pueblo dwellings, yet Matthew still prefers to live there rather than in the modern housing available on the reservation. As Matthew puts it, he's "into the old Indian things."

The only time Matthew has been away from home for any length of time was when he was in the U.S. Army for two years, and then tried life in California after his discharge. He came home. He worked with me for two years as a ski mechanic and I count him as a friend.

My association with Matthew. When I first hired Matthew, I got some of the usual cautions from whites about Indians: never on time, won't stay sober, can't depend on them. Matthew told me in the beginning that he would work hard, work long hours, and that he was the best ski mechanic

in Taos. He also told me that when the Pueblo danced the Turtle he would not come to work. When they danced the Deer, he would also dance. The Pueblo ceremonies would take precedence over his work. It made sense to me and Matthew was true to his word. He worked hard, he worked long hours, he danced the Deer, and he is the best ski mechanic I have ever known.

A Conversation With Matthew

The context. It is the week after Christmas and Matthew is giving me a ride down from Taos Ski Valley to the town of Taos. We are in his big black Ford pickup truck. It has those huge aggressive tires that make it sit so high you have to climb up into it. As we wheel down the curvy mountain road we catch up on what we've each been up to since we last saw each other.

I tell him of my time in Canada. He is interested in hearing about the Cree people I have met. I tell him that a Cree friend of mine expressed a like interest in the Pueblos. He is not surprised; he says, "We're brothers, man."

Matthew had been singing with the Pueblo dancers and they had followed the Pow Wow circuit up to Montana. He asked if I wanted to hear a tape of him singing with some Blood Indians from Montana and southern Alberta. I said, "Sure," so he put it on and we continued to talk.

Our talk of travel prompted me to ask a question I had never asked him but had often wondered about. The question was motivated by the fact that I had never experienced Matthew out of his environment, outside of Taos.

Some dialogue.

How did you like it when you were living in California?

It was alright, I made some pretty good money. But the people were kind of different.

When I first got there I used to notice how people were always looking at me, especially my hair. I started putting it inside my shirt. Then they thought I was a chicano and everybody talked to me in Spanish. I don't speak Spanish, man. But because my name is Montoya and I'm brown they think I'm Mexican or something.

So then I thought, "Screw this, man!," and I started putting my hair in braids again, and sometimes with the colors braided in with my hair. And I wore a headband. Then they knew I was an Indian! But some of them thought I was dfessed for a movie. Anyway, it was better than having people always speaking Spanish to me.

What did you do to make money?

I met this guy in the Army who had a wood working shop, and he asked me to come work with him when we got out. We made these big poster clocks and then I would go around to stores and sell them.

Poster clocks?

Yeah, we would buy big posters, posters of anything. Like pictures of the ocean, or mountains, or cars, or girls, or anything. Then we mounted them on a big piece of Masonite and put about a half inch of clear resin on top. Then you just drill a hole and mount a battery clock motor on the back, put the hands on the front, and some dots to show where the hours are, and you've got a clock. They look real nice.

Did you sell alot of them?

Oh yeah, lots! And it was mostly profit too. The clock motors cost about five dollars and the posters two. We got the Masonite from construction dumps. And we sold the clocks to stores for thirty five dollars.

One thing I noticed: I sold way more clocks when I wore my Indian braids than when I put my hair in my shirt. Like they didn't want to buy nothing from a Mexican but they'd buy

anything from an Indian. We were getting rich. I was making $500 a week easy.

Why did you decide to come home to Taos?

Homesick, man. I was always thinking about what was going on in Taos. I had some good friends out there, but no family, and no Indian brothers. Did you know that I met Rita in L.A?

No. How is Rita doing?

She's alright, but we're not together anymore. She went back home to her family in Virginia. She's a good woman. I might go visit her. We got along real good.

What happened?

You know we lived in my house in the Pueblo. We could have lived in town but she didn't mind not having electricity and stuff. There's a rule against white people living in the old Pueblo but they never said anything for a long time. Then one night these two elders came to the house and said we'd have to leave. I was mad. I said, "Fuck 'em!" I was going to get an apartment in town but Rita wouldn't let me.

But that's a busy day in the ski business and I tell him I have to work. Matthew replies, "Too bad."

Continuing my Matthew experience. I hope that in my future experiences with Matthew I will be able to redress some of the more obvious weaknesses in my understanding of him. I would like to take a more thorough look at the Pueblo art, dramatically presented in their Kachina dolls, pottery, painting, and bead work. I need to enrich my exposure to their myths and legends as part of the narratives which shape their lives, and the music and dance with which Matthew is so involved. I must look more closely at the rich multi-cultural milieu of today's northern New Mexico which is part of the horizon Matthew and I share. Perhaps most importantly, a feeling certainly influenced by a desire to see an old friend, I would spend more time in Matthew's presence "growing older together."

Reflections From the Road

The End

The circle comes around. This is the fourth and final part of this text and I am intrigued by the significance of this number. The Plains Indians, like many other cultures, attach great power to the number we call "four." It is part of a never ending cycle of life. Traveling the four directions will bring you full circle, the four seasons of the year return you once more to spring, and passage through the four stages of life takes you back to the unknown from whence you came.

By coming to the end of this experience called "M.Ed." I arrive once more at the beginning. This seems somehow natural on a pathway that exists more as a way of traveling than as a route to a particular destination. I am confronted now by my original thesis proposal and rereading it causes me to laugh, shake my head, and feel more than a little embarrassed. I am appending it to this text as an example of that first "perfect red marble" which I put in my pocket with such pride and satisfaction.

My beginning deconstructed. Reading it is like encountering a stranger, an experience made even more disconcerting by the fact that the stranger is me. I cannot even get past the title without having my cheeks flush at my

presumption. "A Pathway Toward Shared Horizons: Some Alberta Indian Perspectives" (p. 1); as though a text produced by me might deliver the perspectives of others! The research "question" is next to assault me. "What are the lived realities of Alberta's aboriginal Indian population in relationship to their Native languages and the formal education of their children? (p. 2)" Not only does this stranger expect to experience the reality of others but to do so in the context of his choosing.

To be sure I do feel some kinship with this stranger who is me. The need to understand is similar to my own but his voice is somehow different. Although this stranger pays "lip service" to the difficulty of his task, his language speaks not only of accomplishing the task but of doing it on a time line! And how strange his voice sounds. The words he uses and way he speaks sound so different from my own. His language is so formal and "scientific."

Mostly, I am struck by the naivete of this stranger. He seems to believe that he can take the "data collected," follow "procedural guidelines" (p. 5), "rigorously transcribe" (p. 6), and deliver understanding to the reader. At this point, I suppose, it's too late to warn him. Or is it?

Again I am confronted by the power of the text. Through re-reading my original proposal that person who was me has

traveled through time to speak to a different me. Through the text we can transcend the laws of Newtonian physics and enter into dialogue with the past and the future. And not just the "actual" past and future, but all the infinite possible pasts and futures as well.

So I arrive at the end/beginning of this path and I begin again. But it is a different "I" and, because of this, a different path as well. I look forward to seeing where this path will lead me.

The Beginning

Traveling a new path. To the degree my limited skills allow I have attempted retroactively to hint at this complementary methodology in the writing of this text. Without implying any responsibility for its shortcomings, I see strong evidence in the style of writing of the influences of Max Van Mannen and David Smith, my teachers of phenomenology and hermeneutics (respectively and respectfully). The directions in which this experience has taken me speak of the guidance of Janis Blakey, my advisor, and Regna Darnell, Carl Urion, Marilyn Assheton-Smith, Daiyo Sawada, and Peter Miller (other University of Alberta professors toward whom my advisor so perceptively guided me).

The next step. As I return to the strangers whose stories I have listened to and recorded, and begin an experience called "Ph.D.", I do so with both a renewed

optimism and increased enthusiasm. I am aware of a better way of traveling and thrilled by the possibilities this way offers. I have much to learn and many to learn from.

If the real joy is in the "traveling" what better news is there than that the "trip" will never end? By sharing a poem I would like invite the reader to share the joy of a journeying only just begun.

The Ascent of Mount Carmel

To come to the pleasure you have not
You must go by a way you enjoy not
To come to the knowledge you have not
You must go by a way in which you know not
To come to the possession you have not
You must go by a way in which you possess not
To come to be what you are not
You must go by a way in which you are not

(John of the Cross, 1578)

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APPENDIX

Thesis Proposal

A Pathway Toward Shared Horizons:

Some Alberta Indian Perspectives

A Thesis Proposal Submitted to the

Department of Elementary Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Education

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The Question

What are the lived realities of Alberta's aboriginal Indian population in relationship to their Native languages and the formal education of their children?

Background and Motivation

During twenty years of work and association with three diverse North American cultures (Inuit - Alaska, Hispanic - Texas, and Pueblo - New Mexico) this author has asked himself questions similar to this on countless occasions. I am certainly "old and cold" enough to be painfully aware of the fact that questions of this nature have no definitive answers. Still, the search for those answers seems personally unavoidable. Indeed, the need to ask has grown stronger throughout the years.

The work and writings of Paulo Freire form strong arguments for the importance of questions such as this. Freire contends that education cannot be successful as something that one culture attempts to give to, or provide for, another culture (Freire, 1970). It must be part of, and emanate from, the lived realities of the people within the culture. The educator (as a teacher - learner) must be a part of that lived reality in order to affect education in

any real sense (Freire, 1973). Viewed in this context, the need to understand the reality of a culture is of paramount importance to any educator working, or aspiring to work, within that culture (Freire, 1983). In this sense, the need to understand becomes not just personal but institutional and societal as well.

Although this author is motivated by a desire to "know," my personal conviction that I may never really "know" transforms this desire into a need to "ask." Only through "asking" and "re-asking" (and indeed, in the Freire tradition, "re-re-asking") does the possibility of knowing remain open. It is my inherently optimistic viewpoint that only when you believe you know does your chance of knowing disappear.

Methodology

The question now follows as to how to search for an understanding of this reality in the manner which promises the best chance of success. Traditional sources of information such as statistical data, census compilations, questionnaire results, and government reports provide information that is descriptive and explanatory. However, these types of data yield little in the areas of meaning or understanding.

Returning to the question which motivates this proposal: What are the lived realities of Alberta's aboriginal population in relationship to their Native languages and the formal education of their children? The answer(s) would logically lie within the individual and collective realities of Alberta Indians themselves. It then follows that these Alberta Indians should be both the subjects and the objects of the "asking" of this question.

At this point a phenomenological perspective becomes helpful in determining the best way to "ask." In his work describing the social world, Alfred Schutz presents the "We-relation" in the "face-to-face" situation as the purest experience one person has of another person's reality. Only in this situation do we share time, space, and attention with our fellow man/woman (in Brodersen, 1971). The "face-to-face" We- relationship provides the "richest concentration of contextual clues" for understanding another person (Schutz in Broderson, 1971). In this situation the speaker's facial expressions, body gestures, and eye contact, are combined with the words and enhance the communication.

Understanding, or rather the possibility of understanding, how some individual Alberta Indians experience their realities is the heart of this proposal. The confirmation that this understanding is, at least, a possibility is supported in the works of Weber, Husserl, and,

more recently, by the work of modern phenomenologists such as Wagner and Carson (Weber, 1946; Husserl, 1931; Wagner, 1983; Carson, 1986).

Data Collection

The data collected will consist of audio tape recordings of conversations between the author and individual Alberta Indians. Conceptually, these informal conversations will take the form of a sharing of stories or anecdotes relating to Native language and education. This method is supported by a large body of literature relating to story and narrative and their roles as transmitters of knowledge and understanding (Genette, 1980; Hardy, 1975; Ihde, 1976; Metzger, 1979; Tedlock, 1983).

Approximately twenty "story sharings" will be taped over a period of three months. Permission from the "story tellers" to both record and print will be sought. Strict anonymity will be maintained and procedural guidelines will be followed as presented in Werner and Schoepfles' Systematic Fieldwork Vol. 1 (1987). Possible modifications of this procedure will be explored with the help of experienced University of Alberta researchers.

Preliminary research into the feasibility of this proposal has resulted in an already lengthy list of contacts from the southern part of the province to the north. While

the traveling aspect of this experience is personally attractive, it is also hoped that it will broaden the perspectives of the collected stories.

Presentation

The collected tape recordings will be rigorously transcribed. Those stories relating to the focus areas of this proposal will be presented verbatim in the body of the thesis. The remaining transcriptions will be included in the appendix.

Interpretation

The transforming of the phenomenological experience of the author (as experienced in the "face-to-face" We-relationship) into print results in the unavoidable alienation of text. This alienation results from the fact that "the reader is absent from the act of writing; the writer is absent from the act of reading" (Ricoeur, 1981).

Hermeneutics offers a chance to overcome this alienation through "a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing" (Heidegger, 1962). The hermeneutical approach the author intends to take is based on Heidegger's theory of the circularity of understanding (Heidegger, 1962). This is further developed in the work of Gadamer with his approach to the "prejudice against prejudices" being particularly

relevant (Gadamer, 1982). The dialectic hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur seems then to offer possibilities of meaningful interpretations by reader and writer alike (Ricoeur, 1981).

Throughout this proposal this writer has used the words "possible, possibility, and possibilities" when referring to concepts such as understanding, knowing, or interpreting meaning. Since one person cannot actually be "inside another person's consciousness" (Schutz, 1971), we cannot know or understand that person with complete certainty. This seems to create an essentially hopeless position for the person who needs to "know." Mahn Seug Oh wrote:

> To understand the true meaning of a world, we need to make it speak through our appropriate interpretation of it, although the possible totality of the world and the final interpretation of its true meaning always remain beyond our complete reach. (1986)

The truly exciting element in hermeneutics is that it offers the "possibility" that through a "fusion of horizons of understanding" (Gadamer, 1982), an increased probability of understanding can be achieved. The author hopes that this "fusion" is possible, not only between the reader and the writer through the text, but also between the writer and the people whose words he is transcribing; and between those people and the readers of the resulting text.

In Closing

I cannot "tell the Indian story." Indeed, I do not believe that any person can "tell" another person's story. However, I can "listen" to some Indian stories and I can "tell" my story of that "listening."

It is the potential for this three-way partnership of the reader, the writer, and the "story tellers" that causes me to approach this experience feeling as though beginning an adventure.

Time Line

Collection of stories -May 1 to July 31, 1988

Transcription of audio tapes -August 1 to 31, 1988

Writing of thesis -Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, 1988

Completion and Presentation -January, 1989